



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Head of the OSCE Mission in Croatia, Ambassador Jorge Fuentes

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 17, 2005

Thank you, Madame Chair.

We also welcome Ambassador Fuentes here in the Permanent Council. His visit is particularly timely, coming just days after the visit of Croatian Foreign Minister Grabar-Kitarovic.

We support enthusiastically your hopes and salute your successes so far. We look forward to hearing in greater detail the election reforms to which you refer.

We are pleased to hear that cooperation between the Mission and Croatian authorities is strong, and the mandate is nearing completion.

We agree with your assessment that the Mission should be adequately staffed and funded until the completion of the mandate, in order to ensure that it can complete its tasks as efficiently as possible. We also support the proposal for a "mid year review" in 2006 of the mission's budget, to take into account developments and accomplishments in the next months.

The U.S. supports the Mission's work on refugee return, judicial reform, national minorities, freedom of the media, election reform, and police reform.

Much progress has been made on refugee return, in particular as concerns property restitution. We hope that the same kind of progress will be made soon on the closure of the refugee return file.

We welcome the Government of Croatia's stated commitment to fulfill its international obligations through the arrest or surrender of war crimes indictee Ante Gotovina. Taking this step will be essential for Croatia's further entry into Euro-Atlantic institutions. We also support the Government of Croatia's commitment to domestic judicial reform, and support OSCE assistance for this goal. We support OSCE monitoring of war crimes trials transferred by the ICTY to Croatia.

We support OSCE legislative assistance on freedom of the media, as well as assistance in strengthening the electoral framework.

Thank you.